

Aboard Sengo

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November 2018

The Boat Works

Annual maintenance that
turned into a bit more...

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Southport

Mangroves and coffee –
nice to be back in the
water....and back to
normal...

8



Looking north. Start of the mangrove walk, Southport

Necessary Evils

Boat maintenance
and then...
more boat maintenance



November was not an adventurous month – certainly not in the traditional sense of the word. It was not exciting either. It was educational but for probably the wrong reasons. For most of it, all but two days, we were at the slip for annual maintenance, and a predicted two weeks extended to four. It was expensive and it wasn't fun. Our delay on the slip also meant that the time available for getting south to reach Melbourne for the pointy bit of the Festive Season was reducing and we had to reconcile that perhaps, if the wind didn't play ball in the weeks after we left, we might be having Christmas further up the coast. On the plus side though we did manage a bit of mingling.

Socially we chatted to quite a few boats, most of which were working on their own maintenance issues at the yard. We specifically spent time with the following; some of which were very fond reunions after absences of over two years; **Obsession** (thanks for the supplies), **Moor R&R**, **Social Platform**, **Free Spirit**, **Shining Light**, **Vamonos**, **Platinum IV**, **A Fine Line**, **Vanagi** and **Take it Easy** (where I was delighted with my long awaited and well overdue, cat cuddle from Bengie!). In a totally 'non-boat' related event we also had a delightful lunch with friends, T&B, at the St Bernard's Hotel on Mount Tamborine in the hills – and boy was that break needed!





View from the back steps

A very tiring three weeks....

1st – 22nd November 2018.

The three weeks on the hard stand at The Boat Works were a blur – stressful, uncomfortable, exhausting and frustrating. After having suffered through a horribly hot week of trying to sand several layers of hard antifoul off Sengo's hulls, Andrew decided, after suggestions from a couple of other boaties, that perhaps using paint stripper was the way to go. The product available in the local chandlery had three different strengths and test patches revealed, surprisingly to us and several others, that the product with the greatest strength was the one we needed - apparently most jobs are covered by the mild to mid strength options. Of course this couldn't be sprayed on (a job we were going to originally out source) and needed to be neutralised after application (the product is extremely alkaline) so looking at the options we took a gigantic decision and got someone else to do the job in one go. In hindsight perhaps we could have done the hull in bits ourselves but it

would have taken a mighty long time and I am not sure whether our emotional state would have been intact at the end of it.



Four test patches.....above....
turned into six.... below



Andrew cleaning out the old window sealant

The hulls were stripped individually and a team of people troweled on the 'goop' and then layered paper over the top to keep the moisture in overnight. Troweling off looked relatively simple (but of course we were just spectators). The contractor overdid the second hull (choosing to put more than the recommended thickness of product on hoping the troweling would be less next time). This however gave the 'goop' a life of its own and instead of twelve-plus hours of working time before being man-handled off, the "goop" decided to peel itself off after around half of that. Imagine our surprise when we came back from drinks on another boat (in the dark) to

find the product peeling itself off. Who needs contractors! In truth it was a bit creepy, and as we watched individual areas peel themselves down the hull, like falling ghosts, to the ground, I was reminded, for some obscure reason at the time, of the maggots in the TV series 'Dr Who' (which ironically were created by Global Chemicals dumping lethal toxic waste. Maybe there was something in that image after all!). Sanding back to the hull was relatively quick after this and for a while we had an almost entirely white boat.

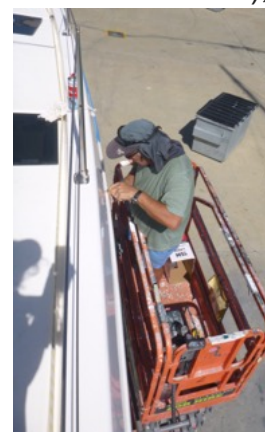
An epoxy layer was then sprayed on as the base layer (unfortunately there was overspray from this which was the basis of some angst between us and the contractors, and by the end of the month still unresolved - the overspray on the hulls was polished off but over-vigorous cleaning of the Bomar hatches has resulted in scratches), and a primer and new antifoul went on afterward. The hull did look pretty good in the end. The professional polish on Sengo's sides also looked pretty good. Admittedly it was not the '\$10,000 Freo special' (yes we know of a boat in Western Australia who was paying that much for a detailing job) and there were a few streaks if you looked at the boat at the right angle, but it was her first 'professional' buff and saved Andrew a lot of work in oppressive heat.

So, why all this trouble with the antifoul? Because we never had a good antifoul holding in the first place. Sengo came to us with hard antifoul on her – supposedly. But after sitting at RPAYC in Pittwater for a couple of months before we picked her up in 2014, her port hull sported a reef (see Aboard Sengo November 2014 for our first comments on this hull). And Andrew has been playing catch-up ever since. He's done the best he can, patched up the flaked off bits from water sprayers with primer, but it was time to bite the bullet – get her back to basics, to a surface he could trust, and put ablative antifoul on her. Whilst this cost us a fortune (and was a bit of a new experience for the contractor who hadn't used that product before) it means that Andrew is confident now with what we've got, that we've got adequate protection and that next time we come up, we will be able to sand the hulls down easily and reapply ourselves (hopefully- despite the 'professional application only' tag) – making our next haul out, in theory, a much quicker and cheaper exercise.

Other jobs competed whilst on the hard stand included replacement of the fridge door handle, and resealing the windows (ironically probably not the source of our leaking main bathroom



window (but the source of the leaks in other windows)). We are aware that the production boats of Leopard, Fontaine Pajot and Lagoon all have issues with the way they install their windows in the factory and Andrew was shocked at the lack of sealant in some areas when he went to pull it out. We also resealed the gunwale rail (probably the actual reason for the water in our main bathroom window), resealed one of the escape hatches (one was okay and we will do it properly next time we haul out), got the engines professionally serviced, got the rigging checked, painted the tinnie, weighed the gas canisters in our lifejackets and replaced the hot water service (see later).



We also got a contractor to fix up a few gelcoat issues (some were our (my) fault), and some were factory flaws. (The deck pattern was ordered from Gibco in the United States to match). We got some stainless placed for protection of the hull from the anchor, swapped the anchor chain over (end-to-end), and put a new swivel on the anchor (hopefully rendering the new stainless below the anchor superfluous). We also decanted a whole heap of superfluous baggage.

What didn't get done (because of the saga with the hot water service) was rearrangement of the port hull contents, and construction of a blind for the helm station.

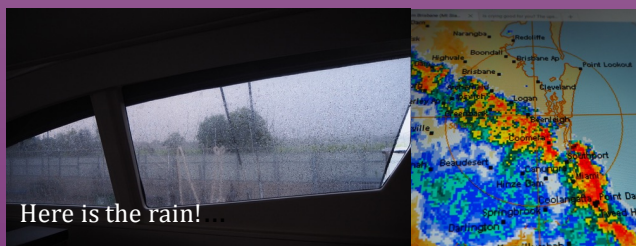
And then it continued.....

After three weeks on the hard, we found ourselves in a bit of a panic to get back into the water – we had never had ablative antifoul before so we were a bit anxious when the shipwright told us that the boat should not be out of the water for more than a couple of days after the ablative antifoul application, and we could only get a confirmed re-entry into the wet stuff a week later. Fortunately we ended up in a cancelled spot two days after the spraying was finished. Belatedly looking at the specs document for this product we see no mention of this requirement and an email to the manufacturer has unfortunately not engendered a response.

After splashdown we were hoping for an end berth in the marina for a couple of days to get ourselves sorted out and tidied up to leave (the back cockpit was a brothel), and complete a few mechanical jobs. The engine service needed finishing off, including the installation of coolant in the port engine (this feeds into the hot water service), the hot water service coolant hoses were still leaking and Andrew wanted to change the water maker filters and service the genset. We had originally been scheduled for an L berth but after a comedy of errors we ended up behind a massive cat on a t-berth - all of which I missed as three weeks of heat, strain, conflict and the start of a cold rendered me a blubbering mess when we went to check out. I was highly embarrassed and trying to laugh through the tears. To give them a wrap, the girls in the office were incredibly supportive. I purposely stayed off boat and distracted during the re launch. A couple of days turned into a week; the coolant hoses didn't settle for a few days and a broken item for the genset service was not replaceable until the mechanic's office opened on Monday (Andrew started this exercise on Saturday). In the end, whilst it cost us more money, it was probably just as well, it meant we got a professional to service the difficult bits on the genset and we were tied to the dock on a very bad day – horrendous temperatures and horrendous winds - Queensland was under catastrophic fire conditions and having survived Black Saturday in 2009 only because of wind change I felt for those affected by the bushfires raging across this state. The Gold Coast Seaway was gusting to mid 40's and we were glad we were tied safely up to a dock.

After many days of hot horrible sunshine....

We left Tiger on board in the re-launching process but it was delayed somewhat due to the weather. There was a high percentage of predicted rain and it threatened with leaden skies as the travel lift was fitted beneath us. Fortunately the contractor had finished the missed bits of antifoul before the downpour – I was on deck pulling out the dock-lines as the boat was raised up and rain started to come down. And then it poured! The wind came up and the decision was made to set us down on the chocks again – probably not ideal for the drying antifoul but much better than swinging in strong winds. Fortunately there were no scheduled movements in or out of the water for a few hours and the decision was made to stop work until the weather improved.



In Hot Water.....or not

The saga of our Hot Water Heater

Whilst the actual haul-out this time was a breeze (I didn't fall overboard, we weren't shoved into a pen that was too small and we didn't get pushed into other boats) we didn't have an entirely carefree experience. The Boat Works Staff were terrific; it was the on-site businesses and contractors that gave us jip.

One of our main concerns, and priorities, was our leaking hot water service. To check the integrity of the system Andrew asked two contractors if they could arrange to pressure test the unit. Neither of them didn't say they couldn't, or wouldn't, do it; they just put kept putting it off or ignoring it. In the end, deciding it was clearly too hard for these businesses to help us, and not knowing what else to do, we bought a new unit (reasonably expensive). Now all we needed was to get someone to install it. This should have been simple. We asked one contractor to do it and he said he would send someone small up after finishing the job he was on (a matter of an hour or so). No one turned up. We reminded this contractor three times that we needed someone to install the unit (one reminder directly to the principal and two through his 2IC – with the direct reminder asking for a 'before the weekend if possible so I could get some other projects done') Still no one turned up. If the contractor didn't want to do the job they should have said so (and we would have respected that and just found someone else to do it). Instead we were left waiting, and wasting time. Apart from the fact that we needed the system installed and working before we left, we were also relying on it being installed under the bed in C2 so I could shift all the stuff off the bed in C3 to the bed in C2 (there was no other room) so I could access my sewing machine and complete a couple of important sewing jobs. These never occurred, as left to our own, inexperienced selves, it took us several days to complete the hot water installation that should have taken a professional half an hour.

The replacement hot water service unit was a copy of the original Kuuma unit; an American brand built in Thailand. We are not plumbers and don't know the intricacies of cross border international connections. We struggled with leaks with white plumbers tape and then after 'Dr Google' suggested pink tape was better, a trip to Bunnings was arranged (fortunately we had access to a car). That didn't work either. Further investigation of 'Dr Google' revealed that the Kuuma fittings are MPT. The braided hoses that attach to this unit are BSP. The threads of these connections are very similar but not the same so they will fit, but no amount of plumbers tape is going to stop a leak. The original installers had been lazy and just bogged the connection up (probably with something called 'dope.' You do learn quite a bit surfing the web!). So a quick morning call to *Whitworths* and the supplier of the unit revealed that the connections were

available but Monday or Tuesday would be the earliest we could get the parts (this was Saturday). A further excursion later after lunch meant we almost got the connectors from an auto accessory store and *Bunnings* (both places had connectors of the right type but not the right size) but unfortunately the local places most likely to have what we wanted were plumbing shops, and these had closed at lunch time. So, the weekend was wasted, we were due to go back in the water in the following week, the hot water service wasn't fixed, and there was no way I was going to get my sewing jobs done. We finally got a part from the place that sold us the unit (on Monday) and found that whilst plumbers tape (pink) worked sealing the connector to the unit, the connection from the connector to the hose wouldn't stop leaking. In the end it was a fellow boatie that put us on to a very different product, a mastic-like substance (sticky and gooey but potable) that finally fixed the problem. Of course, by this time it was close to going back in the water, the coolant hoses still weren't connected and they had their own set of issues to deal with. One hose would not stop leaking and in the end we had the sloppy end chopped off (by another contractor) to try again. When I finally made the bed, the leak from the coolant hose was very minor and fortunately after checking the leak a few days later, had finally dried up. After all this I just didn't have the energy in our final couple of days here to even think about bringing out the sewing machine.....



Peering out at boat yard activity

How do you escape the tedium of your daily routine at a boat yard? Apparently you sidle under the (blocked) door, reach the edge of the deck and...jump. Tiger managed to slip past us one night whilst we were downstairs discussing getting rid of some junk, and the first we knew he had gone 'overboard' was when the night was interrupted by the most mournful meow we have ever heard. We went into panic stations, raced down the stairwell to find the fur ball under Sengo crying. Of course our first thought was that he's hurt himself, and what can we do without transport at 2030! But his limbs seemed okay and there was antifoul underneath his paws and on the back of his back legs. We think what has happened is that Tiger has gone exploring to check out all the people that he watches downstairs every day. Being a cat, his two-meter jump hasn't hurt him (I do note that it is probably the only two meter jump he's ever made) and he's upset because unlike during the daytime when there's been lots of people around, he has found no one downstairs to say hello to. Back on board, Tiger and I then had a few tense moments as he struggled with me trying to wipe the antifoul off his limbs –some came off easily but there were grey smudges on his fur for a few days (I hoped I had got most of it and he wasn't going to get poisoned in his daily licking routine)

The Boat Works

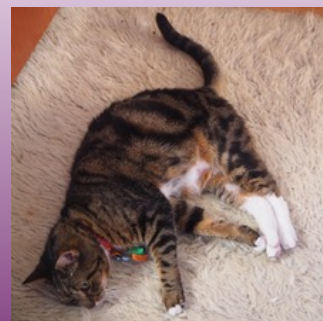
The slip yard

The facilities here have improved since we were here in 2016. Last time we were here I washed the dishes in a bucket and put the dirty water down a drain. This time I had options. There is a new BBQ area which is great for socialising – two BBQ's and several tables for big numbers at Sundowners. The upside of this area is that it is shaded all day and the birdlife in the morning is lovely. The downside of this area is that it is next to the water and the mozzies love it! The Boat Works also now has a small lounge area with a sink, a couch, three cane chairs, a television and microwave. And it is air-conditioned (which can feel very cold at times).

The contractors

The great thing about The Boat Works slip yard is that you can choose to use the tenants on site or you can bring in your own contractors (some slip yards insist on you using their contractors only). We engaged a mix, with mixed results. One particularly uncomfortable incident was when we, by chance, found ourselves the subject of an online marketing campaign – without our permission. At least one of the businesses involved in this incident has apologised (and hopefully learnt from the experience). The lessons we learnt include taking very careful note of who is moving around our boat (particularly if they have a camera), and not to send a carton of beer to our bigger contractors until after we have left dock totally satisfied.

This is what we felt like doing most of the time...Tiger could get away with being 'plonked' on the floor – we couldn't.



Southport

On the 29th November we finally extricated ourselves from the dock at The Boat Works, filled up with fuel at Sanctuary Cove and motored down towards Southport; the idea being to anchor with the hoards in 'Bums Bay' (Marine Stadium) and wait for the opportunity to head south. However upon arrival we noticed an inordinate amount of vessels anchored just out of the protected inlet and several exclusion zone yellow markers across its entrance. Mistaking these for a continuation along the shore south we motored between them only to have an escaping yacht indicate that perhaps it was a no go zone. We hadn't really planned for a Plan B however we ended up anchoring in a reasonable size hole just off the public jetty on the Broadwater Parklands near the kid's play area. 'Australia Fair Shopping Centre' is close by across the road and we've used the public 'pontoon' here before with the tinnie to victual, after the usually wet trip across from Bums Bay. After lunch, after a quick trip to the chandlery at Southport to get another chain with which we can lock our dingy off (the original having disappeared over the past few weeks) we wandered around Australia Fair; the only purchases however were a pair of thongs, a coffee and a few items for dinner.

30th November 2018. There was a more concerted effort at some exercise today; we hadn't done any for four weeks and we are well and truly out of condition. The rule was the 'stroll was to be gentle' - we need to build our stamina up - so we took a 'gentle stroll' north along the parklands, around the 'mangrove walk', through the caravan park and returned via morning tea at *Café Catalina*. *Café Catalina* is on the Broadwater side of the Aquatic Centre and we hadn't realised this eatery was almost within swimming distance of our boat.

Thankfully the winds were light (they were gusting to 45 knots down here on the 28th) and apart from the odd bow wave from a big power boat, the location quite flat. Being on the edge of a 6 knot zone probably helped a bit. The holding is good sand so a lee shore didn't bother us. What a relief to be back in the water.. and back to normal!



The man made mangrove area to the left - civilization to the right

The mangrove walk

The mangrove walk area is not natural - it is a man made feature and has been created since 2009 with sand dredged from the Seaway entrance and mangrove seeds from nearby creeks. The result is a small habitat area that helps filter the pollutants from adjacent creeks and provides habitat for several birds. We heard the singing honeyeater (mangrove honeyeater) and saw a juvenile red backed wren flitting around the vegetation. Adjacent this area was a couple of white ibis. Other birds seen on our walk included black cormorants, pelicans, spur wing lapwings, silver gulls, an Australian magpie and a little friarbird,



Coffee break at Café Catalina - Sengo in background

Café Catalina.

The coffee is good here and the café is open seven days. The reference to Catalina is in memory of the Catalina Flying Boats, a short history of which is in a frame on the wall, along with photos of several models. What I found curious though was their wallpaper, covered with the names of beaches, bays, islands and locations around Australia's coast line - many of which we could say we've been to.